



News Release

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Utah's Health Plans Rated in State Report

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Many Utahns see the New Year as a perfect time to evaluate their choices for a health plan or make changes to their existing health coverage. The *2005 Performance Report for Utah Commercial HMOs and Medicaid & CHIP Health Plans*, released today by the Utah Department of Health's (UDOH) Health Data Committee and Division of Health Care Financing, measures the quality of performance and member satisfaction of selected Utah health plans covering nearly 940,000 members across the state.

“By using this report, health plans are able to identify areas in which to make quality improvements,” said Keely Cofrin, Ph.D., HMO Health Program Manager, UDOH. “The report will also help consumers decide which plan is right for them and their families.”

Measures included in the report come from data collected by the health plans as well as a consumer satisfaction survey. Participating commercial HMOs include Altius Health Plans, CIGNA Health Care, IHC Health Plans, Regence HealthWise and UnitedHealthcare of Utah. Four Medicaid plans also participated: Healthy U, IHC Preferred Provider Network, Molina Healthcare and the Fee for Service Plan. Finally, two Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) plans are represented in the report: Public Employees Health Program and Molina HealthCare of Utah.

Consumer feedback shows the benefit of this report among Utah's citizens and employers. In past years, individual consumers have said that the report “gives good information not available anywhere else” and “shows where improvements are needed.” A Utah-based employer wrote, “It will be a great tool for our employees. Thank you!”

The first major section of the report describes how Utah's HMOs are doing in different areas of health care. Results show that commercial HMOs are performing above national averages in the areas of appropriate medication for asthma, adults' access to preventive care ages 65 and older and blood sugar testing in diabetics. Over the past five years, the percentage of women who had a

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prenatal visit during their first 13 weeks of pregnancy has increased nearly 23 percent. Utah's commercial HMOs scored lower than national averages on several performance measures, including breast cancer screening, controlling high blood pressure and children's access to primary care practitioners.

Measures that show five-year improvements in the Medicaid population include adolescent immunizations, breast cancer screening and childhood immunizations. Blood sugar testing among diabetics in the Medicaid population has increased over 13 percent from levels reported in 2000. One important area in which HMOs serving Medicaid clients could improve is the frequency of chlamydia screenings in women ages 16-25.

The second part of the 2005 Performance Report describes the results of the Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Survey (CAHPS), conducted in the spring of 2005. A total of 2,072 people enrolled in commercial HMOs and 2,236 people enrolled in Medicaid health plans answered the survey. The survey measured what plan members thought about the health care and services they received in the past year.

Medicaid health plans scored at or higher than national averages in areas such as rating of health care, getting needed care, rating of personal physician and courteous office staff. However, Medicaid plans were below national benchmarks in rating of health plan, customer service and getting care quickly. Commercial health plans performed near national averages in measures such as getting needed care and rating of health care but much lower in claims processing and rating of health plan.

The 2005 survey was conducted by mail (11,096) followed by telephone (791) interviews for non-respondents. The data for the report was collected between February and May, 2005. For a copy of the report, please visit <http://health.utah.gov/hda/>

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